

Megiddo Message



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*May the whole
earth be filled with His glory.
Amen and Amen.*

— Psalm 72:19

How About the

Lily-Work?

*I*n the book of First Kings is a detailed description of the work Solomon had done in building the magnificent Temple of the Lord. Everything to do with its construction had to be absolutely the best. All stones had to be pre-cut and polished to perfection; every part had to meet the most exacting specifications.

In the midst of the account is a description of two pillars which were to be set on either side of the entrance to the temple. We read that "He cast two hollow bronze pillars, each twenty-seven feet high and eighteen feet around, with four-inch-thick walls" (1 Kings 7:15, TLB). When the necessary work on the pillars had been completed, we read, "And upon the top of the pillars was lily work" (1 Kings 7:22).

Solomon's father David had cherished grand hopes of someday erecting this beautiful Temple to the name of the Lord his God. From the time he was still young, he had dreamed of doing something great for the Lord. But God said No.

Even after the Lord told David that he would not be allowed to build the house because he had "shed blood" and been a "man of war," David's thoughts were still on the house of the Lord, and he did all he could to prepare the work for his son. David chose the site. Furthermore, we read, "David... set stonecutters to prepare dressed stones for building the house of God. David also provided great stores of iron for nails for the doors of the gates and for clamps, as well as bronze in quantities beyond weighing, and cedar timbers without numbers.... For David said, Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all lands; I will therefore make preparation for it" (1 Chron. 22:2-5, RSV).

So David made what preparations he could,

and Solomon took over the building plans. And when the pillars were made, upon their tops was lily-work.

Now this was not someone's imagination seeking to ornament that which was already complete; God Himself gave the plans for the temple, even to the topmost ornamentation. In Chronicles we read the story of David's instruction to Solomon. He handed the set of plans to his son (1 Chron. 28:11), and then turned over to him the material with the specific statement that all was to be done according to the plan. "All this," said David, "the Lord made clear to me by the writing from the hand of the Lord upon me."

What about the lily-work, then? It was part of the plan. The temple was not complete without it.

Is there not lily-work in our lives, too? When we have done what we know we must, is there not yet a little more we can do? Is there not something over and above the letter of the law which will add a crowning grace of beauty to our lives?

Ours must be a living sacrifice, a willing work, a free-will offering. When we have done that which is our duty to do, we haven't done enough. God wants our all, even the little "extras."

Let us do all we can. Give the extra gift, go the second mile, be unwearied in well-doing, make the additional sacrifice graciously and lovingly, forgive unto seventy times seven. This is our lily-work, and the Lord delights in it.

Wrote an author of yesteryear: "Most of the differences between top people and average lie in three words. Those who succeeded were thoughtful of others, considerate and kind—and then some. They met their obligations fairly and squarely—and then some. They could be counted on in emergency—and then some."

That "and then some" is "lily-work." □

MEGIDDO MEANS ...

"a place of troops" (Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon); "a place of God" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

WE BELIEVE ...

- in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

The Herald and the KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

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All Honor To the KING!



It is a widely acknowledged fact that December 25 is not the actual date of the birth of Jesus Christ. Nor is the common manner of celebrating, with its gross commercialization, any tribute to Him.



Why Not December 25?

The origin of the December festival is simple history. For more than two thousand years before Christ was born, the winter solstice was celebrated by Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians. In Rome, December 25 was hailed as Brumalia, the birthday of the "new" sun after its long journey southward. The date was welcomed by kindled fires and lighted candles as tokens of festivity. It was a time of wild license and revelry.

Why does our present so-called Christian culture associate Christ with this godless, pagan day of merrymaking? Did God arrange that His Son should be born into the world at such a time, and that His followers should celebrate His birth then?

He did not. December 25 on the Christian calendar was a third century innovation. It was not among the holy days carried over from Judaism into the early Church (remember that the Jews were not even willing to recognize that the Messiah was born), nor was its observance begun by the apostles. But in the early centuries after Christ, as the church began to depart from the teachings of its Founder and enlarge its practices and beliefs, the December 25 celebration was added to the church calendar as a "Christianized" festival because of its universal attrac-

tion and irrepressible popular appeal. By thus doing the expanding church could win the favor of thousands of pagan worshippers who would, with a few concessions, come into the "fold." To strictly enforce the narrow principles Jesus taught and forbid the celebration of the winter solstice was unthinkable. Even some (so-called) Christians themselves wanted to celebrate it. The *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* tells us that the celebration of the winter solstice was "too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence.... The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner."

Sir George Frazer, in his book *The Golden Bough*, writes as he compares Christian and pagan religions and practices that "it was the custom of the heathen to celebrate on the twenty-fifth of December the birthday of the sun. Accordingly, when the doctors of the church perceived that the Christians had a leaning toward the festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnized on that day. It would not be necessary for the newcomers to the faith who had grown up in a pagan world to give up the festive merrymaking of the December holidays." In the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* we find this comment concerning December 25: "This was the date of a pagan festival in Rome, chosen in AD 274 by the emperor Aurelius as the birthday of the unconquered sun, which at the winter solstice begins again to show an

increase of light. At some point before AD 335 the church at Rome (not the God of heaven) established the commemoration of the birthday of Christ, the Sun of righteousness, on this same date." Here they made a connection: that Christ being called the "Sun of righteousness" could be symbolized by the physical sun; hence, those celebrating the sun worship festival could think one step further and at the same time worship Christ as the true "Sun." This was how Augustine justified the selection of the date: Christians, he said, should celebrate December 25 not on account of the sun or any sun god but on account of the Sun of righteousness. Even he did not claim it to be Christ's actual birth date.

Is there anything whatever in the Bible to support the observance of December 25 as the birth of Jesus? There is nothing, absolutely nothing.

Many people who recognize that December 25 is not the true date of Christ's birth rationalize that since the Bible does not tell us the actual date, God could not condemn us for celebrating another date, so long as our heart is right.

We agree that there is no text of Scripture which tells us precisely the date of Christ's birth. We must also remember that the calendar being used at that time was not the same calendar we use today, hence we cannot say Jesus was born on any date on our calendar.



Christ's Birth...When?

Even though we are not told an exact date, the Bible does give some information about the time of Jesus' birth. To understand it, we first need to locate the beginning of the sacred year, according to Bible reckoning.

From God's directions to His chosen leader Moses, we can learn the date of the beginning of the Hebrew year. At the time the Israelites departed from Egypt, God commanded (Ex. 12:2), "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." And we read the name of this month in the next

chapter: "This day came ye out in the month Abib" (Ex. 13:4). The month Abib, then, is the first month of the Bible year.

Abib, or Nisan, is appropriately named; for "Abib" according to the Hebrew Lexicon means "spring, sprouting month, the month of green ears, beginning with the new moon of April or March;...the month of flowers." At the beginning of this month, the first new moon after the vernal equinox, the Hebrews of old observed the beginning of the sacred new year. The command of God regarding the recognition of this month was specific: "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 16:1). The month Abib being the first month of the year was to be remembered and observed. Also the Passover, which fell on the fourteenth of this month, the anniversary of the night when the Israelites left Egypt, was to be commemorated.



A Spring Date

We feel that the Bible evidence strongly points to a spring date for the birth of Jesus Christ, a date coinciding with the beginning of the Jewish sacred New Year. Observe these points:

1) At the time Jesus was born, shepherds were watching their flocks on the Judean hillsides.

The Gospel writers tell us about the time and circumstance of Jesus' birth. We read from Luke's Gospel: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8). This could never have occurred in Palestine during the month of December, for the shepherds, we are told, brought their flocks from the mountains and fields and corralled them not later than mid-October, so that they could have protection from the cold rainy season that followed. The sheep were not out again until the early spring. The account of Luke, then, limits the

time of Jesus' birth to the season between March and mid-October.

We are told also by reliable sources that the sheep were actually "watched" in the fields only during the lambing season, which is the spring of the year.

2) At the time Jesus was born, Caesar Augustus had issued a decree that all should journey to their own

Observe the
month of Abib, and
keep the passover
unto the Lord thy
God. — Deut. 16:1

city to register for the purpose of taxation.

If a ruler wished to collect as much tax as possible, it would be unreasonable that he would make such a decree at a season when the roads were for all practical purposes impassable.

3) At the time Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph were attending a sacred Jewish feast at Bethlehem, the city of David, both of them being of the lineage of David.

In First Samuel 20 we have a record of David's plans to be absent, for safety reasons, during certain feast days—which could easily have been the Abib or New Year feast, though we are not told. He said to his bosom friend Jonathan, Saul's son, "If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice [feast, margin] for all the family" (v. 6).

Psalm 81 speaks again of a significant new moon feast, which was a time of celebration and rejoicing: "Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a

statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob" (vs. 2-4). And verse 5 seems to connect this with the Abib season: "This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt," or as the Knox translation reads, "when he left Egypt"—and we know that the Israelite people "left Egypt" in the month of Abib (Ex. 12:2; 13:4).

It might well have been the observance of this important new moon feast, probably the feast of Abib, rather than the tax decree, which called both Mary and Joseph to the city; for the presence of only the male member of the house was required for registration.

*A life so
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honor.*

We read: "And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; [because he was of the house and lineage of David]" (Luke 2:1-4). Joseph went up with Mary at the time Jesus was born, hence it seems much more likely that she would have accompanied him for the purpose of attending the feast, not for the matter of the taxation.

4) The first tabernacle was set up precisely, by Divine decree, upon "the first day of the first month" of the year (Ex. 40:2). It seems reasonable that God arranged that the birth of His Son should occur on the same significant day of the year, He being the reality which the first tabernacle typified.

What is the connection of Christ with the tabernacle in the wilderness? The tabernacle in the wilderness was God's way of dwelling with men, a symbol of the role Christ shall fill as the eternal tabernacle of God dwelling with men, when "they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" [Christ, Emmanuel, "God with us"—Matt. 1:23] (Rev. 21:3). Again, Christ is the head of the spiritual house of the Lord (Heb. 3:6), the first stone to be completed for the eternal struc-

ture, even the "chief cornerstone" (1 Pet. 2:5-6).

For these reasons, the members of the Megiddo Church set aside the first day of the sacred New Year, Abib (which falls on the first new moon after the spring equinox, this year on March 28-29) to thank and praise God for bringing us to another new beginning and to honor our coming King.



Is It Wrong to Celebrate Jesus' Birth?

Some people who recognize the paganism of the December 25 celebration feel that it is wrong to celebrate Christ's birth at any time. They point out that the only birth-days mentioned in the Bible are those of Pharaoh and Herod.

While this is true, it may be coincidental; for there are other considerations.

The Bible tells us to render "honor to whom honor" is due (Rom. 13:7), and to whom could more honor be due than He who is our Elder Brother, our Judge, our Advocate with the Father, our perfect Pattern and Example, our coming King? Surely a life so pure and holy and dedicated, and so essential to us, is worthy of special honor. Should not a day spent honoring Him and refreshing ourselves in the principles He taught be of benefit to us in our effort to become like Him? Living in an age when His return is imminent, we feel our obligation the more keenly, to do all we can to stimulate ourselves in our effort to prepare for the great Day of the Lord.

By setting aside the first day of the year for spiritual observances, in recognition of the New Year and of the birth of Christ, we counter the December 25 observance and take an open stand for God and His cause.

Also, by observing Jesus' mortal birth we reinforce our belief in His mortal (not Divine) nature, that He did not pre-exist but was in "all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). We honor His birth as the beginning of a life and not the incarnation of a life that had been existing for centuries.

At the same time we honor the King, He whose greatest work in our behalf is yet future, when He shall "come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. 1:10).

So let us give, in the words of the familiar hymn, "All glory, laud and honor to Jesus Christ the King."

We honor Him not as a babe in a manger but as a mortal being who went the whole way to immortality, and in whose steps we are privileged to follow. If God sent angels to announce the glad tidings of His birth, can we be wrong in our tiny echo of those tidings? □

HOW TO WORK YOUR RESOLUTIONS

The story is so familiar. Good resolutions don't last. They start out well, backed by plenty of good intentions. But then, for one of a thousand reasons, our good efforts get frustrated, and we set them aside.

Yet this does not *have* to happen. What can we do to make our good resolutions *work*? Here are a few key principles of a proven strategy.

1 Start by telling yourself "I can."

More than likely when we make a new resolution we start in the negative. This point where we have made the new resolution is one on which we have failed many times before—that is the very purpose of the resolution, to break the routine of failure. We have practiced failing so long that it is by far the easiest and the most likely course to take. And—of course—we *might* fail again.

Making this provision for failure is one sure way to fail again. The purpose of the resolution we make is to *remove* that allowance for failure, to tell ourselves that others have done it, and *we can, too*. Whatever the nature of our problem, it *can* be conquered. Simply because we *have* failed is no evidence that we *must* fail.

Defeat is *not* inevitable if we apply ourselves while time and opportunity are still ours. If we are sincerely serving God, He will help us; there is no need to fail.

2 Make today a new start, a new point of beginning.

Separate the past from the present. Opportunity past is out of our reach, and we might as well forget about it. But the present is very much *within* reach. The present is our responsibility, and we are

accountable for what we do *right now*.

The proper division of time matters greatly in the battle against temptation. Perhaps we need to stand aside and look at ourselves. What *are* we accomplishing? where do we hope to arrive? and by when? A new start may well mean the difference between victory and defeat, and if we win a small victory today it will be easier to win another victory tomorrow.

We should learn to face all our problems one day at a time, one hour at a time, one minute at a time. This is all the Lord requires of us, and this is all we are really equipped to handle. When we try to do more, we are attempting something we should not, and are sure to fail.

3 Use your will power and won't power.

How strong are you? Perhaps that is hard to measure. But ask yourself a few questions:

How much strength does it take *not* to speak the word that is in your mind?

How much strength does it take to force one thought to give way to another thought?

How much strength does it take *not* to walk to a place where you want to go but where you really would not want Jesus to come and find you?

How much power does it take to look the other direction, away from something you know will tempt you?

Are you strong enough? Can you do it?

Do you have the strength *not* to open a book that you know is interesting, but not edifying?

Are you strong enough to smile and encourage another when you feel discouraged?

How much strength does it take to speak when you would rather be quiet when you know it is your duty to speak?

How much strength does it take to hold back the unkind word?—or perhaps this is not enough. Perhaps Jesus would have us stop still further back, at the point where we first frame the thought in our mind.

Yes, "*from within, out of the heart of man*" is the source of all unholiness. That is why Jesus would have us check our feelings, our motives, before they become words. The first little germ of evil should be crushed in the mind before it develops into either word or action. Jesus taught that *all* sin begins in the mind.

This means that it can *end* there also.

4 Strengthen your motivation.

Ask yourself: What is my real reason for making—and keeping—this resolution? What do I want to accomplish? Where am I planning to arrive within the next month, the next twelve months?

If we let ourselves lose sight of our goal, we are sure to be defeated. And conversely, if we keep our mind's eye fixed on the goal, and keep developing the picture of the goal in our minds, no power in the whole world will be able to defeat us. No pressure can be too great, no temptation too strong, no evil from within too powerful to withstand—if we remember our high calling in God.

What is our real motivation? What position are we working for? Where do we hope to arrive? Have we pictured ourselves in the presence of Jesus, receiving His smile of approval? Have we visualized the triumphant saints standing on Mt. Zion—and *we ourselves* among

them? Have we let the strains of the new song, the song of Moses and the Lamb, run through our mind, and felt the joy of triumph? Have we paused long enough to hear the angels shout *"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready"* (Rev. 19:6-7).

Can we picture ourselves standing there among the Bride of Christ if we fail to do the little God asks of us?

We need to strengthen our motivation not once a year, or once a week, or even once a day, but continually. We simply can't afford to let the bright picture of future glory fade from our sight. If we lose sight of our goal, how can we expect to reach it?



5 Keep busy.

No truer words were ever spoken than, "The devil finds work for idle hands." While we know that there is no literal devil, we do know that there is nothing worse than doing nothing. God means for us to be actively engaged with something useful, whether it be useful work, or simply useful thinking. He does not want us to be idle. The idle mind does no good—and much evil.

Our daily routine, our ordinary work, be it ever so commonplace, is a blessing in the battle for life. The routine is a protection against the pitfalls of idleness. It forces us to take our minds off ourselves and focus on specific situations around us. It forces us to do what we often may not feel like doing. But this is all for our development, for our long-term good. And even if we are not able to do what we would like, we must still engage our minds in useful activity and maintain an active watch over our inner selves. In reality, there is no such thing as an idle mind. We are either building ourselves up, or tearing ourselves down.

Our minds left to themselves will produce no good. Left to wander without conscious direction, propelled by instincts rather than goals, they are sure to come to naught.

A ship on the ocean must be steered if it is to reach a destination; an airplane must be piloted, a car must be steered. Only the wind can travel without direction—and what does it accomplish? Where does it arrive?

Whatever we do we must at the same time be building up our spiritual resources. We must take our minds off smallness and direct them toward greatness. One woman told of her resolve to make every comment encouraging. She was astonished to discover that she had been deriving some sort of perverse pleasure from finding fault, and in this way had

been harming herself and those around her.

The sooner we can discover—and correct—these traits in ourselves, the better.



6 Help someone else.

When we get together with other people, or even our own family, what do we talk about? We may blame a lack of upbuilding or edifying conversation on others. But if we are present, we are just as responsible as the next person—and equally at fault.

It is so easy to waste valuable time talking about secular issues, petty reactions, the daily news, and trifles of little or no consequence. If our hearts are set on the future and the quality of character we are working to develop, our conversation will reflect these goals.

It is impossible to have the Kingdom the central goal of our lives and not have it the central topic of our conversation. What we are interested in, we will talk about.



7 Pray for God's help, and work with God.

Asking God's help is one of the best ways of diverting our minds from smallness. We cannot think with God and think small. We cannot open our minds to His direction, and worry about tomorrow. We cannot take Him as our guide, and fail.

As we see our lives a part of God's purpose, as we draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to us. This is the promise. And what a gracious promise it is!

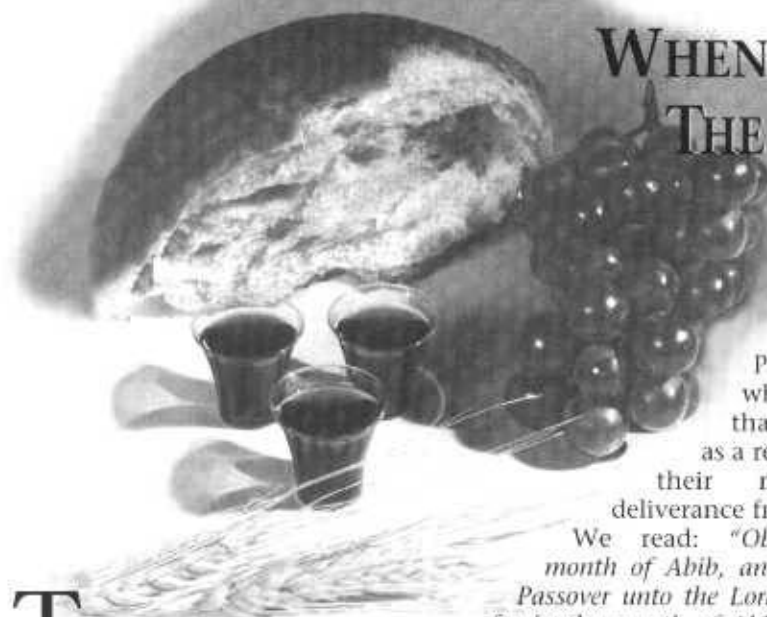
If we truly belong to God and our lives are linked to Him in a loving, gripping bond of dedication, we simply will not be able to live without thinking of Him and His will for us. There will be a bond that will keep us wherever we are, whatever we are doing. Our communication with Him will prove a steadying, transforming influence in our lives, changing our attitude from one of proud self-reliance to one of humble submission. We will find ourselves asking, Is this what God wants me to think about? Is this what He wants me to do? Is this how He would have me feel?

No problem will be too large or too small to share with Him. And remember, a problem shared is only half the problem.

The nearer we live to God, the less the things of earth, the temptations of the world, and even the inclinations of our own hearts, will affect us.

Only seven steps. Take them, and you will find the power to make your resolutions work, and at the same time will be building the quality of character which will win the approval of God. □

WHEN DID JESUS INSTITUTE THE NEW PASSOVER?



To understand the Biblical dating of the events around the crucifixion of Christ, we need to review a few facts about the Hebrew year according to the law given by God to Moses. As far as we can know, this was the calendar the Jewish people were still using at this time.

Let us first establish the method of counting days. According to the law given to Moses, the day was to be measured "from even unto even" (Lev. 23:32). That is, the day began at six o'clock in the evening, rather than at midnight.

Second, we need to establish the proper means of determining the beginning of the year. We learn from Exodus 12:2 and 13:4 that the first month of the year was the month of Abib: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you."

The Hebrew month of Abib, which began the sacred New Year, commenced with the first new moon following the spring equinox. And according to the original arrangement given to Moses, the first day of the year was also the first day of the month and the first day of the week (see Lev. 23).

The Israelites were commanded to commemorate the month Abib, the first month of the sacred year,

and the Passover, which fell in that month, as a reminder of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt.

We read: "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord thy God; for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night" (Deut. 16:1).

The date for the Passover remembrance, as well as the manner of observance, was precisely spelled out in the Law. "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover" (Lev. 23:5).

We also need to observe where the Sabbaths fell in the month Abib and the new year. Counting from the first day of the year which was also the first day of the week, the seventh day of the year would be the first sabbath; the fourteenth day would be the second sabbath; etc. By this means of counting, the Passover, on the fourteenth day of Abib, always fell on the second sabbath of the year. The day of the Passover would begin with the beginning of the fourteenth of Abib, in the evening, and that evening was to be the time of the memorial observance. The following evening, the beginning of the fifteenth of Abib, and the following day (still the fifteenth of Abib), was the Hebrew festival of the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest. The command was, "On the morrow after the sabbath [he] shall wave it." The fourteenth of Abib being the Passover and the Sabbath, the day of the fifteenth would be the "morrow after the sabbath" accord-

ing to Moses' law (Lev. 23:10-11).

The account in Luke confirms that the Passover fell on a sabbath. Luke 23:54, speaking of the day of His crucifixion, reads, "And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on."

The observance of the Jewish Passover in the year of Jesus' crucifixion and the chronology of events around that time, including Jesus' Passover with His disciples, His betrayal, condemnation, crucifixion, death and resurrection, relate significantly to the above plan for counting days.

WHEN did Jesus observe the Passover with His disciples? Was it on the accustomed Passover of the Jews, or was it one day earlier?

We believe that it was one day earlier, on Abib 13 rather than on the accustomed day of Abib 14.

Recall that Jesus sent His disciples to make special arrangements for the keeping of the Passover observance with Him.

Matthew, Mark and Luke (Matt. 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7) all suggest that Jesus gave these directions to His disciples, when it was already the thirteenth of Abib. This would place the actual Passover meal with the disciples on the evening of Abib 14.

However, let us look at the account in the gospel of John, which records more detail.

John 13:1 indicates that Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples before the accustomed time for the Jewish Passover (Abib 14)—because of His strong desire to eat it with them before He suffered. This suggests that had He waited until the usual time He would not have been able to partake with them.

The text reads: "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended..." The Supper with the disciples was "ended" and it was still "before the feast of the passover."

The narrative continues with details of the conversation that followed at that last Passover supper that Jesus kept with His disciples. And as John said, He kept it "before the feast of the Passover"—one day early, that is, on Abib 13 instead of Abib 14.

Following the supper, He went with His disciples to Gethsemane, where He prayed and "shed as it were great drops of blood." There He was betrayed, arrested, and led away to be arraigned before Annas and Caiaphas. These events took place during the night of the thirteenth of Abib. The following day, the morning of the thirteenth, He was taken before Pilate, then sent to Herod, and back to Pilate again; then condemned to die, and by the sixth hour, or noon, He had been placed on the cross. By the ninth hour, or three o'clock, He was dead. During the remaining three hours of the day He was removed from the cross, placed in Joseph's new tomb, the tomb was sealed, and the people returned to their homes to begin the celebration of the Passover feast during the early hours of Abib 14.

This sequence of events reveals that Jesus died about three hours before the beginning of the Passover and sabbath.

The following facts reinforce the point that Jesus kept the Passover with His disciples one day early (Abib 13) and was crucified on that day and not on the Jewish Passover:

1) If Jesus partook of the Passover at the regular time of the Jewish Passover, then the events immediately following that Passover meal, i.e., the betrayal, the arrest, the trial, and the crucifixion, would all have taken place on the Jewish holy day. This seems unlikely, as Matthew records that when the "chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people...consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill him," they said No. "Not on the feast day, lest there be an

uproar among the people" (Matt. 26:3-5).

2) It is also unlikely that the Sanhedrin would have been functioning on the "holy night" of the Passover—it was a time held sacred by all the Jewish people.

3) The Talmud says that Jesus suffered on the "eve of the Passover"—not on the Passover itself.

4) Jesus said at the Supper, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Knowing that He was to be crucified, He planned the Supper to be one day early, or the night of Abib 13.

How does all of the above relate to our counting time today?

First we must determine when the sacred year begins. Abib, the first month of the Bible year, commences with the first new moon after the spring equinox. The equinox occurring on March 20 this year, the first new moon following occurs early on March 28, hence the sacred year begins with the evening of March 28.

Following this timeline, the first sabbath or the seventh day of the year would begin the evening of April 3 and continue through the day of April 4. The second sabbath, also the Hebrew Passover, would occur on the 14th of Abib, in the evening of April 10, and continue through April 11.

The anniversary of the night Jesus kept with His disciples would occur on the thirteenth of Abib, which we will observe on the evening of April 9. During this night, and the following day, Jesus was betrayed, tried, crucified, and buried—before the beginning of the Sabbath, also the Jewish Passover, that evening, or Abib 14 (on April 10 this year).

Jesus rested in the grave through the day of the Sabbath, or Passover (April 11), then early the next morning (April 12 this year), "upon the first day of the week," He was resurrected. This day, often called "Easter," a name originating with "Ashtar," the Babylonian goddess of spring, was set by the Council of Nicaea to be celebrated the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. This year the first full moon occurs on April 11, placing their celebration of "Easter" on April 12, the first Sunday following—which happens this year to coincide exactly with the date of Abib 15. □



God makes a PROMISE:
Faith believes it, Hope anticipates it,
Patience quietly awaits it.



"MY PEACE I
LEAVE WITH
YOU, MY PEACE
I GIVE UNTO
YOU....I HAVE
OVERCOME THE
WORLD"

— JESUS

U IN THE UPPER ROOM

*In the upper room they gathered
On that early Abib eve,
Little thinking, as they sat there,
That ere long their hearts would grieve.
For, in trusting that their Master
Soon would manifest His power
There was no anticipation
Of the dark and trying hour.*

*In the upper room they listened
While He spoke so tenderly,
Spoke of glories soon awaiting
For the Man of Galilee;
Then He told them of His trial
Ere the night should pass them by,
One disciple would betray him—
Each one asked, "Lord, is it I?"*

*In the upper room they tarried
Eating of the broken bread,
Eating also of the morsels
Now so richly for them spread.
Then they drank the cup, and wondered,
What it meant, that He should die,
And they learned about the lifeblood
Which each one must crucify.*

*In the upper room assembled,
The disciples heard their Lord
Say that after His departure
They should write a "written" Word;
And they heard these words of comfort,
"What though darts at you are hurled,
Fear them not, be of good courage,
I have overcome the world."*

*O h, the mem'ries of that evening,
Seated in the upper room,
Strengthened through severest trials,
E'en the shadow of the tomb;
And the multitudes who heard them
As they spread the Gospel bold,
Knew that they had been with Jesus,
For they could His faith behold.*

—L. L. Snyder

Do You Really Believe?

*L*isten! It is a question from the Master Himself: Do you believe? Do you *really* believe? Is your faith in God and what He has promised a gripping, growing thing, a constant propelling power in your life? Can it be said of you that *"your faith grows exceedingly"*?

Imagine the living Christ standing before us this morning and saying to us as He did to Martha long ago at the time her brother Lazarus had died: *"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."* And then those four words that penetrate the deepest recesses of our conscience: *"Do you believe this?"* (John 11:25-26).

The Master was sounding the depths of Martha's faith. What if He directed this question to us? *"Do you really believe?"* How would we answer?

Our first response would probably be positive—of course we believe! No other answer would even sound reasonable. We profess the name of Christ. We have outwardly and openly committed ourselves to obey His every precept. Yet, when we think deeper into the meaning of Jesus' words, can we honestly reply with the confidence of Martha, *"Yes, Lord, I believe"*? Or might we need to say, as did another believer: *"Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief"*? (Mark 9:24).

God would have us remove the shadows from our certainties. Yes! We believe—because God has spoken through His Word. Yes! We believe—because we have seen the Word of the Lord fulfilled again and again. Yes! We believe—we know God will be true to His

Word, that as surely as the earth exists, just so surely shall it someday be glorified. Do we cherish in our hearts a personal and realistic expectation of the world to come, fully confident that future life is a possibility for us? In the words of the Master, *"Do you really believe?"*

Most of us will readily acknowledge that our faith could be stronger. There has been too much hesitation in our commitment, too much reservation in our believing, else this late hour would find us much further along the road to life than we are. What is the problem? We know God has given us life and breath. We know He has created this planet for a glorious purpose. We know the Bible is His Word—its certainty has been confirmed to us a thousand times. And we know what that Word demands of us.

Why, then, do we linger? Why do we hesitate? Why this questioning of things we *know* and are *convinced* of? Don't we realize that God means what He says, and that His long-suffering cannot wait forever while we vacillate and hesitate?

On the Emmaus Road

Two believers very much like us were walking along a stony road one day long ago. They were deep in conversation about everything that had been happening. Things could not have been worse, it seemed. And probably the road seemed longer and stonier than ever before, though they had traveled it many times. As they trudged along, trying to make sense out of the scuttling of their hopes, a stranger joined them and wanted to know what

they were talking about.

"You must be the only stranger in Jerusalem who hasn't heard the things that have happened there recently!" said one of the two, whose name was Cleopas.

"What things?" the Stranger replied. He appeared to have no idea of the subject of their conversation, so Cleopas went on to explain that there was a man from the village of Nazareth, Jesus by name, who was clearly a prophet of God, but who had been executed by crucifixion. "We had hoped," said Cleopas, "that he was the one who was to redeem Israel." Like other believing Israelites, these men had read the prophecies and had confused those of Christ's first advent with those of His second, and so had looked for Him to be a liberator and a savior at that time. They had listened to His preaching, and had had grand hopes, but—

They had given up; now they had to express their faith in the past tense: "We had hoped," they said, indicating that now all hope was gone. Had they fully believed and recalled the words of the prophets, they could have added, "...and we are still hoping." But at so critical a time their faith had failed.

The words of that Stranger that day—who proved to be no less than the Master Himself—were a stinging rebuke to them and all of us who are like them: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). And then, we read, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). How much had been written; but they were slow to believe.

Too often we are like those brothers of long ago; and if Jesus were to walk awhile with us, might He not have to say it again: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe." We tell ourselves we know what we should believe, and what we should do. But let something happen, and how quickly our minds are distracted and our vision of faith is lost. Why? Because we are so slow of heart to believe. What fools we show ourselves to be, wasting precious hours in disbelief when time is so limited! What fools to hesitate with so much evidence before us! Why are we so slow?

In the physical world we depend on faith and exercise it freely. If we did not have faith that we would awake tomorrow morning, we would not willingly fall asleep tonight. If we had no faith, we would never shake hands with anyone lest we contract some disease they might be carrying. If we had no faith, we certainly would never venture down the highway, lest the first car we met should fail to keep on his side of the road and should crash into us head-on. If we had no faith, we would not eat lest the food we consume be toxic to our system.

In the physical realm we literally live by faith. Why can we not extend the same confidence into the realm of the spiritual, where faith is at least a thousand times more justified? "The just shall live by faith" (Heb. 10:38). A living, active faith is what keeps the "just man" alive; he cannot be spiritually animate without it. Faith is a matter of life or death. Why are we so slow to believe?

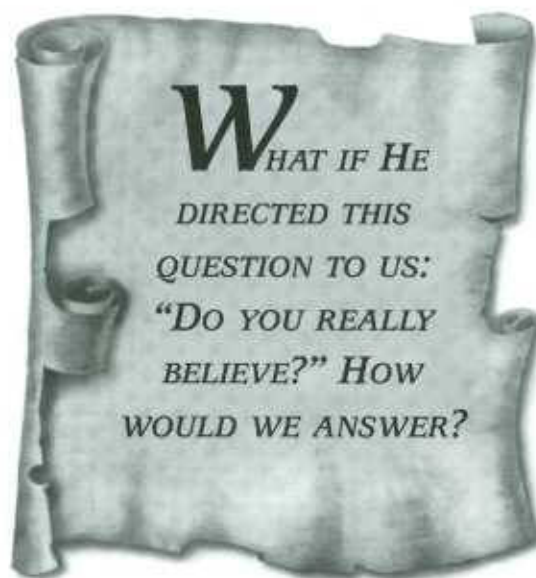
More Than Sight

We may contribute a large part of our slowness in belief to our singular position in the day of salvation. We are

among the few people during the entire six thousand years between the time of Adam and the arrival of Christ, who have had to live entirely by faith. We have seen nothing direct to confirm our faith. If only we could see one miracle, or one open demonstration of Divine power, or talk with one angel, our problem would be solved; our faith would abound forever.

But would it? Can we be sure?

Strangely enough, seeing is *not* the full answer to the problem of faith. Although it has—understandably—



been a great stimulus to many, there have been hundreds and thousands of people who have seen with their own eyes open demonstrations of the power of God and have failed to believe wholeheartedly.

Consider the children of Israel and all they saw of the power of God. Surely if any people should have had faith, it was they. Scarcely had they begun their journey when the Red Sea parted and they all passed over on dry ground. And then, just as miraculously, the waters closed in upon their pursuers, and the hosts of Pharaoh perished. For forty years they followed the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, both divinely provided (the angels of God). For forty years they harvested manna daily, which they had neither to plant nor cultivate. Before their eyes, water gushed out of the rock; they saw the mountain smoke, and quake, and burn with fire; they saw the earth open and swallow the offenders, Dathan and Abiram and all that belonged to them. But how many believed? How many used what they saw as the foundation upon which to build a strong, abiding, working faith in God? We are not told, but we know the number was very, very small. And that was an age of sight!

Or think of Elijah on Mount Carmel, and the thousands of Israelites who witnessed the dramatic display of Divine power that day. Fire came down from the azure blue and consumed the altar, sacrifice, stones, water and all. But how many believed? Their immediate response

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Sure

Summer Autumn Winter

Winter, spring, summer, autumn. Winter, spring, summer, autumn. Who has ever seen it fail? Who worries that it will?

The great patterns of nature are not capricious. One can always know—with certainty—what is coming next. The coldest winter will yield to the budding springtime, and the heat of summer be not far behind. When did it ever fail? The longest day will be followed by the dark of night, and every night can look forward to another dawn.

Thank God that His creation is so dependable. It is all sure and certain!

Just as certain are His promises. The budding springtime is our guarantee, signed with His signature! What He has promised WILL BE, just as surely as spring follows winter, just as surely as the trees burst into flower and leaf.

"As the earth puts forth her blossom, or bushes in the garden burst into flower, so shall the Lord God make righteousness and praise blossom before all the nations" (Isa. 61:11, NEB).

God has given His promise, that:

- Christ is coming to be Earth's Judge, Conqueror, and glorious King
- "Righteousness and praise" shall triumph worldwide (Isa. 61:11)
- "Quietness and assurance forever" shall be the happy portion of all people on earth (Isa. 32:17-18)

Spring

& Certain



- Once the Kingdom of Christ is established, "He shall reign ...for ever and ever" (Luke 1:31-33)

All these promises are sure and certain.

Sure as the sequence of day and night. "If you can rescind my ordinance of day and night, that there should be day-time and night-time no more, only then will I rescind the privilege granted to my servant David and there shall be heirs of his throne no more." (Jer. 33:20-21, Knox)

Sure as the existence of God. "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Num. 14:21)

Sure as the rains that water the earth, giving food to the human family. "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isa. 55:10-11, NIV)

Sure as the sun gives light by day and the moon and stars by night. "This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the Lord Almighty is his name: Only if these decrees vanish from my sight, declares the Lord, will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me." (Jer. 31:35-36, NIV)

What God has promised He will perform. "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." (Ps. 89:34)

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of

man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Num. 23:19)

"Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant." (1 Kings 8:56)

"For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass;... I will say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. 12:25)

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." (Deut. 7:9)

God has spoken. Let us believe it, act upon it, prepare for it.

For lo, it will surely come.

The promises of
God are as sure as the
budding springtime.

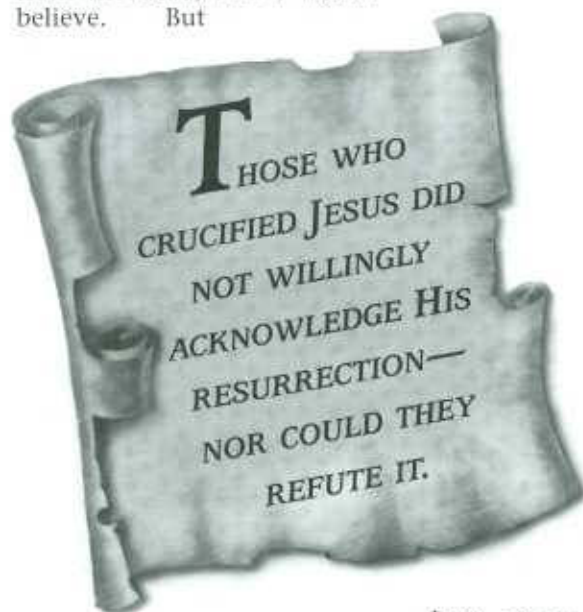
Do You Really Believe?

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was positive: "The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!" (1 Kings 18:39) but how soon they forgot. Even Ahab saw it, but the event apparently made no lasting impression of faith.

For three years Jesus was among the people of Judah and Israel, preaching and performing mighty miracles which proved the authority of God behind Him. Any one of His miracles should have brought lasting conviction to any honest heart. But how many believed? How many demonstrated their belief in a life of faithful following? Again we are not told; but the number was very small.

We think, if only I could see someone raised from the dead; then I would believe. But



how many saw Lazarus come forth? The Bible tells us that "many of the Jews which...had seen the things which Jesus did, believed" (John 11:45). But how many? and for how long? Not all who saw believed, as the very next verse tells: "But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done," to stir up trouble against Jesus (v. 46).

Those Jews who crucified Jesus did not willingly acknowledge His resurrection, we can be sure; but neither did they succeed in refuting it. The empty tomb was evidence indisputable. Clearly, something had happened; Jesus was alive!—yet no multitude joined the ranks of the believers.

In the years immediately following Jesus' ministry, His apostles went everywhere preaching the gospel of the risen Lord—and how could they have done this so soon after the Resurrection if there had not been ample evidence to prove their claim? Time and again they demonstrated the authority behind their

message by the signs and wonders they performed. There was no question; it was all true. The result was the greatest conversion in the history of God's people, yet it was only a handful. The majority gave no heed.

What about the people who knew the apostles personally and saw their manner of life, men like John or Peter or Paul? What was the problem? Wouldn't we have been convinced if we had seen what those people saw?

What about those who saw Jesus' miracles, or those of the apostles? Is it possible that human eyes can see so much and yet not believe? It is a serious warning to us, and an evidence that real belief is a matter of mental discipline, sincere attitude, and honest conviction. It takes more than seeing to believe. When Christ returns and evidences of His judgments are everywhere, even then two out of three will not have the faith, foresight and willingness to submit to the new Ruler, so unbelieving are humankind by nature.

An Age of Skepticism

Besides the absence of visible Divine power, we today have another problem: we live in an age of skepticism. Much as we try to resist its influence, the atmosphere is filled with it; there is no escape. What can we do? The first thing is to recognize it; then we can fortify ourselves to deal with it effectively.

Our world today, particularly its secular art and literature, is saturated with what might be called the "naturalist" point of view. The "naturalist" preaches, often subtly, that you can know only what you experience. All truth is relative; there are no absolutes, no pre-determined standards of right or wrong moral behavior. Each person must determine his own values and standards through "creative self-assertion." Behind this philosophy is the belief that life is a cosmic fatalism; man is doomed to rolling a stone up a hill, only to have it roll down upon him finally and crush him to death. In such thinking there is no God, no solid faith, no unchangeable truth.

To accept such a view of life is to say that nothing lies beyond the realm of our experience, that we are here without design or designer; that all life is a chance proposition and that we know all there is to know. We might compare such a view of existence to a man sitting in a closed room, who concludes that there is nothing to the universe except the four walls that enclose him. He does not think to ask who put him there, or to reason that he sees only one side of the wall, that there must be somewhere a second side. He simply absorbs himself in the study of his four walls of existence, until he dies.

Thank God! such a restricted view of life is

not ours. God Himself has invited us to observe the visible evidence of His creative power: *"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold, who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might"* (Isa. 40:26). The stars, the planets, the sun and moon and the million evidences of creative genius in nature all around us, plus the overwhelming confirmations of His written Word, convince us that we do *not* know all there is to know, that present life is *not* the limit of existence. We *know*; there is no reason for our being so slow to believe.

The Problem of Shortsightedness

Another problem in our slow faith is our inherent lack of vision. So many "things" lie so near at hand, that the future is hard to think about. Immediate concerns of what we shall eat, or wear, or live in, or enjoy, absorb so large a part of our interest that, if not exceedingly careful, we shall have little left for the world to come. In the words of the poet:

*"The world is too much with us,
Early and late, getting and spending,
We lay waste our powers."*

There is also the problem of complacency. It is born in us. As long as we are flesh and blood, we shall be subject to the patterns of human inertia. The law of inertia says briefly that a body at rest tends to remain at rest; and a body in motion tends to remain in motion. What is true in the physical realm is true also in the spiritual. But how much more inclined we are to remain at rest when resting than to remain in motion when moving! To remain at rest, we need do nothing; we can think as we please, pursue life in any manner we wish, and we are sure to get nowhere. A powerful force must be exerted to move us and keep us moving.

What need for willpower and won't-power, when dealing with the problem of inertia. We must be able to tell ourselves what we *will* do—and think and say—and what we will *not* do and think. To not *feel like* doing what we know we should, is no excuse for not doing it. This inertia is not a problem new in our age; God's people in all ages have had to exercise self-discipline. God's people in all ages have had to exercise willpower and won't-power. It is vital to faith. Without it there can be no true faith, and no action.

Danger...

The dangers of a slow, stalling faith, are shocking. If the day of the Lord arrives and finds us still hesitating, still waiting, still vacillating, still struggling with our convictions, our work not nearly so advanced as it might have been—and all because we did not have enough faith to put *all* our effort into it—what then?

This is no time to drift along with a weak, half-believing faith. Weak faith makes procrastinators, and procrastination is sure to prove fatal. To procrastinate is to put off doing what we know we *ought* to do—and what we *would* do, if we really believed. According to our faith we work. If we knew absolutely that Jesus would be here in thirty days, if we really believed it, what superhuman

progress those thirty days could show! That is the way we need to be living every day, proving to ourselves what we *can* do. We will never regret the extra effort we invest; to give too little may prove an eternal disappointment. There is no time for putting off; we are too near the end!

The problem is that too often we lack the force of wholehearted conviction. It is the lesson of Jesus' parable of the Ten Virgins. All ten took their lamps, trimmed them, filled them with oil, lighted them, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. At the time they set out, no one would have thought but that ten virgins would welcome the Bridegroom when he should come. And had the Bridegroom arrived when they expected Him, all would have been well. But there was an unanticipated delay; longer and longer they waited, and still the Bridegroom did not come. Some of the lamps started to flicker and go out—they had run short of oil. When the Bridegroom finally arrived, only five lamps were still burning. Five had prepared for the unforeseen by taking an extra supply of oil, and how abundantly their foresight was rewarded! But oh, the sad plight of those whose lamps went out.

The lesson is for us, who live in the time when the Bridegroom is expected. We have looked for His coming for many years, and still He is not here. Are we prepared for this? Do we have enough oil of faith to see us through, however long the seeming delay? Are we continually renewing *our* supply, lest our plight be that of the five foolish virgins?

Another danger before us is that of being so slow to believe that we do not sense our sluggishness or lack of faith. It is possible to think our faith stronger than it is. *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"* (1 Cor. 10:12). Here is a warning to each of us. Faith to be strong and vital must be continually renewed, or it will never be able to stand against all the foes which threaten it today. Overconfidence is deadly to faith. If we feel so secure, so satisfied, so well established that we exert little or no effort to build ourselves up, we are in great danger. Overconfidence will get us nowhere.

There is a nineteenth century story of a man who sent his young son to Sunday School each week, but who seldom attended himself. One Sunday, the son questioned his father. "Dad," he queried, "why don't you go too?" "I don't need to, Son," the father replied; "my faith is established."

Later the same day the father decided to take the family to visit the grandmother, who lived a few miles up the road. He harnessed the horses to the buggy, and everyone climbed in. But before they were out of the yard, the horses became hopelessly mired in mud. The more the father tried to maneuver the horses, the more hopeless the situation became. When all the father's efforts were unavailing, the young son, who had been watching thoughtfully, called out to his father, "Dad, they aren't going anywhere. I think they're *established*."

Let us check closely our attitude toward ourselves and our own faith—and be sure that we are not so "established" that we are getting nowhere!

Think of the power to work for God that would be ours if our faith was all it could be! What great things we

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Christian ABC's

Spiritual growth is a narrow road that leads to contentment and happiness. But at the same time it restricts our activities to those that will advance the growth process. It means:

ADMITTING a wrong even if you wouldn't be found out;

Being **BUOYANT** in a flood of trouble;

Being **CONTENT** with what you have;

Having **DETERMINATION** through trying times;

Finding fresh **ENERGY** when you feel burned out;

Being **FAITHFUL** during moments of doubt;

GIVING to others before you think of receiving;

Being **HUMBLE** when others heap praise on you;

Being **INTELLIGENT** to say no to sin;

Having **JOY** at the very moment your prospects seem darkest;

Being **KIND** to your oppressor;

Taking every opportunity to **LEARN** from others;

MOURNING when you fall into sin;

Being **NICE** to others when they do you wrong, realizing you also have been wrong;

OBEYING God even when you do not understand His will;

PERSEVERING when you think you're too tired to go on;

Being **QUICK** to pay a vow and

RELIABLE when you could slack off;

Being willing to **SACRIFICE** your all to a caring God;

Holding **TRUTHFUL** when a lie would be easier (and more comfortable);

Maintaining an **UNQUENCHABLE** love for God;

Being **VALIANT** to stand for right;

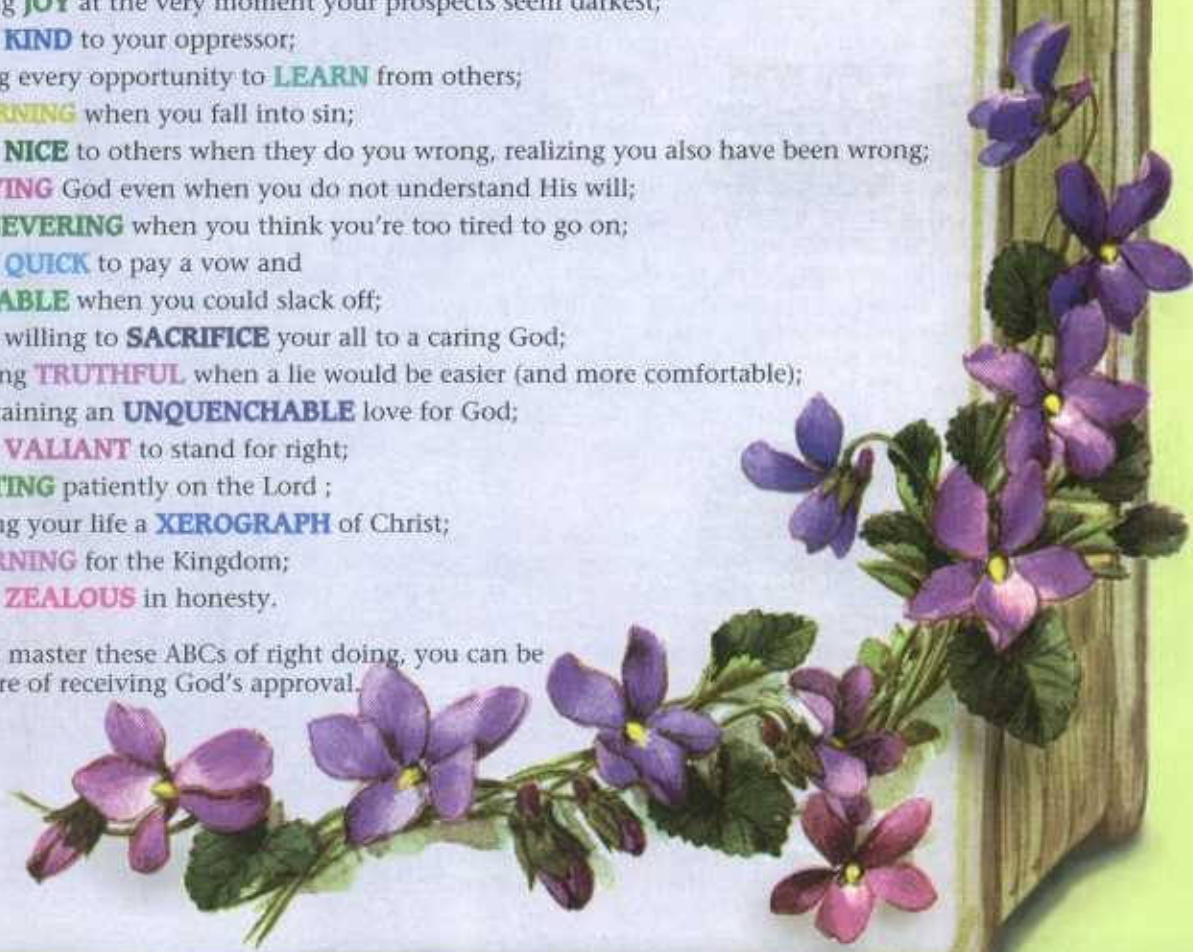
WAITING patiently on the Lord ;

Making your life a **XEROGRAPH** of Christ;

YEARNING for the Kingdom;

Being **ZEALOUS** in honesty.

If you master these ABCs of right doing, you can be sure of receiving God's approval.



Why Not Yet?

For more than eighty years now the MESSAGE has been proclaiming the imminent return of Jesus Christ. For more than eighty years it has been saying, "The Bridegroom is coming. Get ready to meet him."

Now, after eighty plus years of unfulfillment, how do we feel? Are we disappointed?

NO.

Are we discouraged?

NO.

Are we wondering if our fathers and mothers in the faith were mistaken in expecting Christ in our time?

NO.

Maybe the Lord has changed His plans?

NO.

Maybe we should modify our position to something like, "It seems likely that Christ may come in our time"?

Again the answer is NO, a thousand times NO!

Our position has not changed, and it will not. We in 1998 take precisely the same stand that was taken by our predecessors in the faith. We repeat it today as emphatically as ever they said it: "The Lord is coming soon—get ready to meet Him." What looks to us like a century-long delay only means that the great Day is a century nearer!

But the inevitable "Why?" remains. Why not yet? Why hasn't Christ come? If our faith is well founded and our confidence sure, why hasn't He come? Why not yet?

First, *Christ has not yet come because God's time has not yet expired.*

When the time is right, Christ will come. "When the fullness of the time had come" God sent Christ the first time (Gal. 4:4). And can we not trust Him to act in such a timely manner again?

In the meantime, He being from eternity to eternity and we being creatures of a moment, so to speak, can't we allow that His conception of time may be very different from our own? What is a single century on His time scale, He to whom a thousand years "are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night"? (Ps. 90:4).

Second, *Christ has not yet come because God's mercy surpasses anything we can imagine.*

The door of opportunity is still open. This means that He is still waiting for a few members of His eternal family to complete their work. And should we not be grateful? Who among us would have had a chance if Christ had come when our forbears expected Him?

Yes, thank God for the seeming delay!

Were those who were preaching the imminent return of Christ 80 plus years ago wrong in doing it? Their calculations and estimates of time were wrong, as it has turned out; but Jesus said clearly that "no man

knoweth" the day or hour of His coming, so how could they know? But they were not wrong in proclaiming its imminence when they did. In fact, had they pictured it a century in the future, how would they have been moved to get ready for it *in their time*?

God knows our need. He knows the complacency that naturally plagues us, and our human tendency to put off—and might this not be one reason He allowed the Day to be expected too soon? Had the full length of time been known a century ago, isn't it possible that those of that generation, being human like ourselves, might not have had the impetus to go ahead and accomplish the work they were called to do, to prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord?

Furthermore, had the generations before us taken lightly so great a promise as that of the Second Advent of Christ and put "far away" the Day of the Lord, had they not felt the urgency of the time, would they not have been showing great disrespect to the Author of the plan? God means us to take Him seriously *whenever* He speaks—even though we are not told all the details we might like to know. And if, on the basis of limited knowledge, we make a misjudgment, will God condemn us for this? Were any people ever condemned for serving Him *too early* or preparing *too soon* for what He predicted?

No, the fact that the great Day of the Lord has tarried longer than we anticipated means only that it is that much nearer now. Prophecy upon prophecy has been fulfilled, telling us that these are the "times and seasons" of the end of the age. It has not yet come, but it *IS* coming.

So let the consuming question with us be, What can I do to increase my chances of being accepted when the great Day comes? For lo, *it will come.*

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure" (1 John 3:3). □

*The world is very evil,
The hour is very late:
Be sober, and keep vigil:
The Judge is at the gate;*

*The Judge who comes in mercy,
The Judge who comes with might,
To terminate the evil
And diadem the right!*



JOHN

I Was His Closest Friend

I am known in the fourth Gospel as *"the disciple whom Jesus loved."* A common inference from this title is that I was by nature a lovable character. That, I must confess, was anything but true at the first. Just as people have often been too severe with Judas, judging him to have been a fiend from the beginning, so they have often been too kind to me, judging me to have been always a saint.

I was anything but a saint on the day that Jesus turned to me and my brother James and rebuked us saying, *"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them"* (Luke 9:55-56).

You remember the story. We were passing through Samaria on our way to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. We needed lodging for the night. Jesus had sent two of His disciples ahead into a village in front of us to make arrangements. As you are aware, Jews and Samaritans held sharp differences of opinion on certain religious and racial matters and, in general, had no dealings with one another.

But our Master was different. He lived above prejudice and bigotry and taught us to do the same. Once before, in passing through Samaria, He had stopped beside a well to talk to a woman about the water of life. Not only she but many of the people from her village believed on Him and welcomed Him. So grateful were they for the message of salvation Jesus had brought them that they urged us to abide with them and we did for two days.

You will recall, also, that Jesus in telling a parable to illustrate what it

means to be a genuine neighbor made the hero of His story a Samaritan. Also, once when He healed ten lepers, one of them—the only one who came back to thank Him—was a Samaritan.

The point is—the Samaritans had every reason to treat Jesus and us, His disciples, with courtesy and to extend to us the overnight hospitality which we had asked. Imagine our astonishment, then, when the two disciples returned from the village with the report that the Samaritans would not receive us! In the case of my brother and me, it was more than astonishment. We were insulted. And stirred. "Lord," we said, *"wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"*

Little wonder Jesus nicknamed us "Boanerges," which means "Sons of Thunder." It was one of His ways of reminding me that before I could become a saint, the apostle of love, I had to bring under control my unruly temper!

Until I came to know Jesus, I was not unduly concerned about my temper. Like so many people in your age, I regarded it as a rather minor fault, regrettable, but sometimes an asset (!) and not a thing to be taken into serious account in evaluating character.

There is a story concerning a woman of your generation to the effect that she once said to her minister: "I must confess that I explode now and then, but I get over it quickly." To which he replied: "So does a machine-gun, but it blows everything to pieces." Oh, the incalculable harm that temper may do—even though it passes over quickly.

There is another story about one of your contemporaries, a young man,

who was on a crowded streetcar one morning when he was accidentally shoved by an older man who stumbled. The youth flung an angry word at the man and moved on toward the back of the car.

Thirty minutes later, when the same young man entered a business office where he had made application for a position, he found himself in front of the desk of the man to whom he had spoken so rudely on the streetcar a short while before.

"Your qualifications are not bad," said the man behind the desk, "but in view of your lack of self-control on the streetcar this morning, they do not mean a thing to me." And the interview was over!

An unruly temper is not an insignificant fault. And in combination with jealousy, anger, pride, vindictiveness, cruelty, self-righteousness, touchiness, or sullenness, it is one of the worst of sins.

I am not forgetting that there is such a thing as justifiable indignation. Jesus could and did grow zealous against a public evil such as the legalized system of graft organized and operated by the priests and money changers in the court of the temple. He could and did become vexed when He saw wealthy men closing mortgages upon widow's houses and narrow-minded men standing between Him and the healing of an afflicted man on the Sabbath, and pretentious hypocrites by their pride and pious platitudes keeping other people from hearing the Gospel. Jesus' feelings, you see, were always social, not personal or selfish. He was never stirred by anger because of a wrong done to Him as an individual. In all such cases, and they were many, He practiced what He preached—going the second mile, turning the other cheek, doing to others as He would be done by. "When he was reviled, [he] reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:23).

I wonder if you have learned the secret of conquer-

ing that temper? I, who was at the beginning of my relationship with Jesus a "Son of Thunder," had to learn it, or would never have been known as the disciple Jesus loved.

There is another story in the New Testament which reveals how far from saintliness I was at the beginning. It is the one which tells about the day my brother and I came to Jesus with the request, "grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory" (Mark 10:37). At that time I was selfish, greedy, worldly. I was like Judas—interested in Jesus primarily because of the personal glory I might have when He set up His Kingdom.

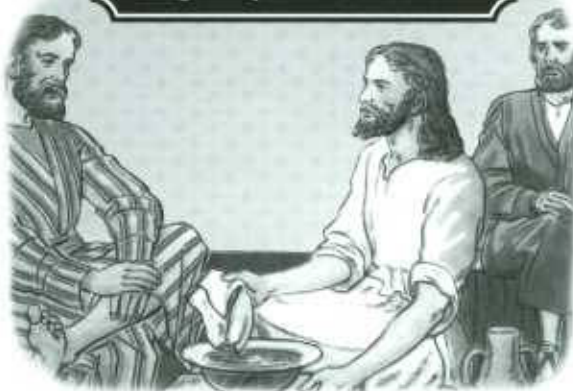
Before you condemn me, will you not search your own heart to discover just what you are primarily interested in?

You live in a land of fabulous material abundance—automobiles, airplanes, exquisite clothes, luxurious homes, all kinds of sports and pleasures. These are the prizes that glitter before you, and are you saying, "They shall be mine; I shall pursue them"? Are the things of this world your goal and ambition?

You talk and pray about the Kingdom of God, but do the things of this world take too prominent a place in your desires? Are you seeking what this world can offer?

I speak with great feeling, because it was worldly ambition—not drunkenness, not impurity, but greed which brought about the

My ambition would have ruined me, had I not been willing to lay it at Jesus' feet.



downfall of Judas and which would have ruined me also, John the son of Zebedee, had I not been willing to lay my ambition at the feet of Him whom I had come to call Lord and Master.

Looking back upon that day, my brother and I asked for those two thrones and realizing how selfish and worldly our request was, I marvel at the patience of Jesus with us. Neither of us ever forgot the searching words with which He closed the interview; "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Mark 10:43-45).

His meaning came home to me with even greater force a few days later. We were gathered in the Upper Room for the Passover Supper, when to our astonishment we saw Him coming in with a basin of water and a towel, as though He were a slave, to wash our feet.

He had every human reason to be irritated with us. We had often argued about who was or would be the greatest among us. None of us was interested in doing the work of a slave. And here was Jesus about to wash our feet! No group of men were ever more completely ashamed or rebuked than we. After Peter's feeble objection, we sat in silence, the silence of humiliation, as He knelt in front of each of us in turn, bathing our feet, then wiping them with the towel.

As He finished He said: "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.... The servant is not greater than his lord.... If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:15-17). In those unforgettable words was the sting of rebuke, but also the healing power of His patience and love.

Another thing that helped to change me was what He said to me at the time of His crucifixion. I was there, as you remember, when He was on the cross. A few others of His devoted disciples were there

also, among them His mother—and He committed her to my care. “Woman,” He said, addressing her and looking upon me, “*behold thy son!*” while to me He said, “*Behold thy mother.*” It touched my heart to think He was entrusting her to my care, and from that day forward I provided for her as if she had been my own mother.

Jesus did not take away my ambition, but He transformed it. He redirected it—away from self and toward service, away from my desires and toward His purpose. As you may know, the eagle was my symbol. I wanted to fly high. The Master did not turn me into a barnyard fowl; He did not even clip my wings; He only showed me how to fly higher!

So, as you open the pages of the Book of the Acts, you find that instead of calling down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, as I once wanted to do earlier, I am preaching to them, laying my hands upon them, and praying that they too may receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8: 15).

Instead of running away from danger or grasping after my own glory, I, with Simon Peter, am standing face to face with the same Council which had condemned Christ to death, and replying to their command not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus, “*Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*” (Acts 4: 19–20).

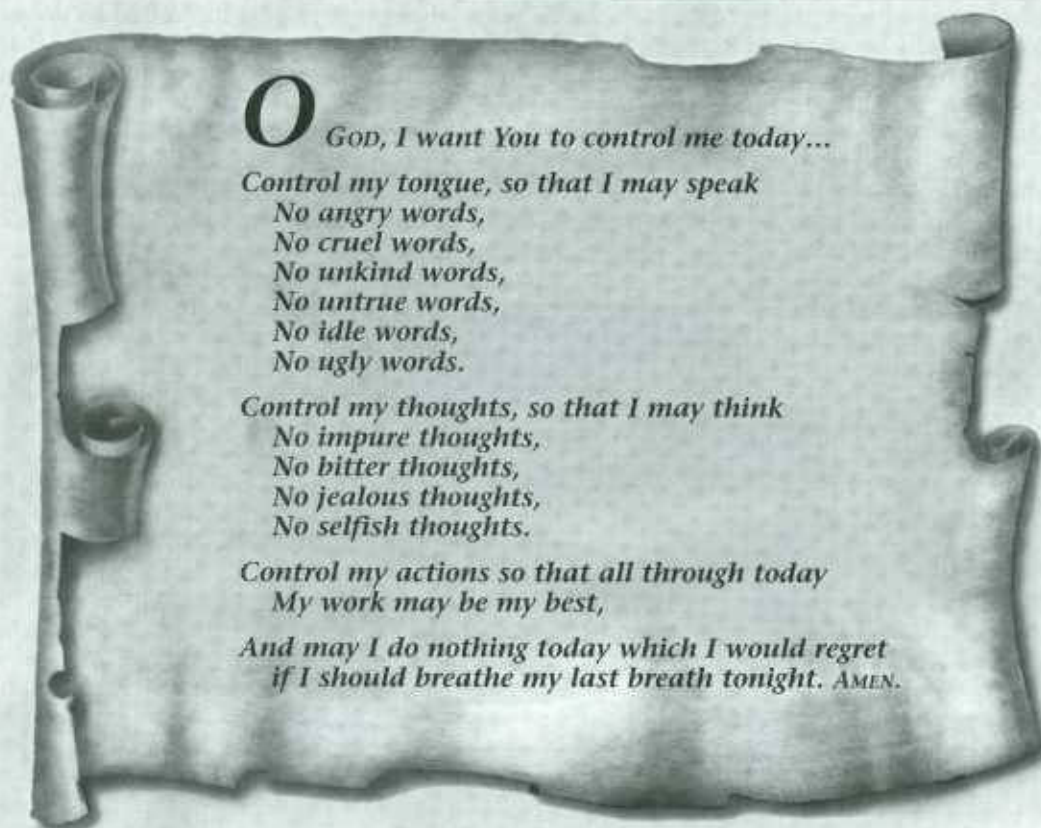
I had the opportunity of being close to Christ. I was one of three with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, also one of the same three who waited close by while He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was I who leaned upon His bosom at the Last Supper. To my shame, I fled when He was arrested, but I quickly recovered and found my way into the high priest’s house where I stood by Him at His trial. I was at the cross when He died. Over against my faults and sins, this was my redeeming trait and also the secret of my growth in grace and trans-

formation in character—that I sought intimate fellowship with Him. Day after day and hour after hour, I stayed close so that I could copy His example.

That is still the secret of transformation into His likeness. You cannot wish yourself good—you must actually make the change. The plan I recommend is the same urged by another first century Christian who wrote: “*Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus*” (Heb. 12:1–2).

That was my secret, the secret I was trying to make clear as I penned the words of Jesus’ last sermon, in the 15th chapter of my Gospel, that sermon in which He reminds you that the Christian life at its best is as if Christ were the vine and you the branches; that if you abide in Him and allow Him to abide in you as the branch abides in the vine, then you will naturally, inevitably, bear much fruit. So shall you be truly His disciples. □

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Know Your Bible?

Who Is Older than Whom?

Place in order by their birth:

1. Amram, Aaron, Abraham, Abihu
2. Ruth, Rahab, Mary, Esther
3. Isaiah, John the Baptist, Malachi, Nathan
4. King Saul, Zechariah, Solomon, Silas
5. Eli, Aaron, Bartholomew, Samuel
6. Rachel, Miriam, Sarah, Rebekah
7. Gideon, Ezekiel, Samuel, Caleb
8. Anna, Abigail, Asenath, Athaliah
9. Joab, Joseph, Jonah, Judah
10. Ahab, Asa, Azariah, Agabus

Common Interests

What did each of these groups have in common?

1. Reuben, Simeon, Levi
2. Festus, Felix, Agrippa
3. Ezra, Shaphan, Baruch
4. Ithamar, Abihu, Eleazar
5. Dagon, Baal, Molech
6. Samuel, Othniel, Deborah
7. Laodicea, Philadelphia, Ephesus
8. Stephen, Philip, Nicanor
9. Miriam, Anna, Deborah, Huldah
10. James, John, Andrew, Simon the Zealot
11. Haggai, Habakkuk, Hosea, Nahum

Who Dreamed?

1. That the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down before him? _____
2. That a great image was struck by a stone on its feet? _____
3. Two different dreams that had the same meaning? _____
4. About a ladder on which angels ascended and descended? _____
5. That a vine budded and brought forth clusters of grapes? _____
6. That he was warned to flee with his family to Egypt? _____
7. That four beasts came up out of the sea? _____
8. A dream he couldn't remember but knew was very important? _____
9. That they (some visitors) were to return home by another route? _____

All About Faith

1. Who is known as the "father of the faithful"? _____
2. Complete this statement: "Moreover it is required in _____ that a man be found faithful." _____
3. To whom did Jesus say, "Be not faithless, but believing"? _____
4. In which parable are these memorable words: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"? _____
5. Who said, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much"? _____
6. Which chapter of the Bible might be called the "faith" chapter? _____
7. What is the promise to those who are "faithful unto death"? _____
8. To whom did Jesus say, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"? _____
9. To whom did Jesus say, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt"? _____
10. What is the composition of the "shield" which will "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked"? _____
11. What compliment did Paul, Silvanus and Timothy give the Thessalonians about their faith? _____
12. What does Paul recommend as the perfect trio of virtue? _____ & _____

(ANSWERS ON PAGE 26)



The King Triumphant!

JESUS, our Lord and our Savior,
Is dwelling in heaven above;
But soon He is coming with blessings,
For all who abide in His love.
Yes, Jesus ascended to Heaven
And sits at the Father's right hand,
But soon He will come to His people,
To welcome His own waiting band.

With power He's coming to conquer,
Commanding the world to obey;
To turn from their warfare and carnage
And walk in the new, living way.
The kings at His presence shall tremble,
"Who is this that cometh from far,
Commanding the world to obey Him,
To lay down their weapons of war?"

"Who is this demanding dominion
Who comes with His armies apace?
Our people shall NOT bow before Him:
Assemble your hosts to His place!"
Vain men, 'gainst the power of Jehovah,
Go forth with their weapons of war,
Resisting in open rebellion,
The King who has come from afar;

The One who is strong to redeem them,
To save them from sorrow and strife,
To deliver their land from oppression
To give them the blessings of life.
The Lord who is coming from Heaven,
With power all nations to bless,
All nations design to resist Him,
And keep Him from giving them rest.

The people take counsel together,
Their kings and their rulers combine,
To cast off the bands of the Savior;
Their armies against Him in line.
The hosts of the Lord rise in conflict,
His strong ones prevail 'gainst weak man;
The battle is sharp and decisive,
Thwarting earth's kings in their plan.

For God, who beholds them from Heaven,
Looks down from the place of His might,
Commands that His chosen ones conquer,
And put down earth's kings in the fight.
To His Son He hath given dominion,
And power to conquer and reign,
He'll establish His kingdom forever;
Eternal His throne shall remain.

Earth's rulers submit now before Him,
The nations bow down to His will,
Compelled to His kingship acknowledge,
His mandates of peace to fulfill.
Jerusalem stands forth triumphant,
In glory outshining the sun;
The throne of the Lord is established,
The reign of His glory begun.

The law now goes forth from Mt. Zion,
While blessings descend from our God;
Jerusalem shines forth in glory,
Earth's capital, ruling in love.
The nations, now freed from their thralldom,
Rejoicing, can lift up their head;
A strong One has brought them redemption,
Has freed them from sorrow and dread.

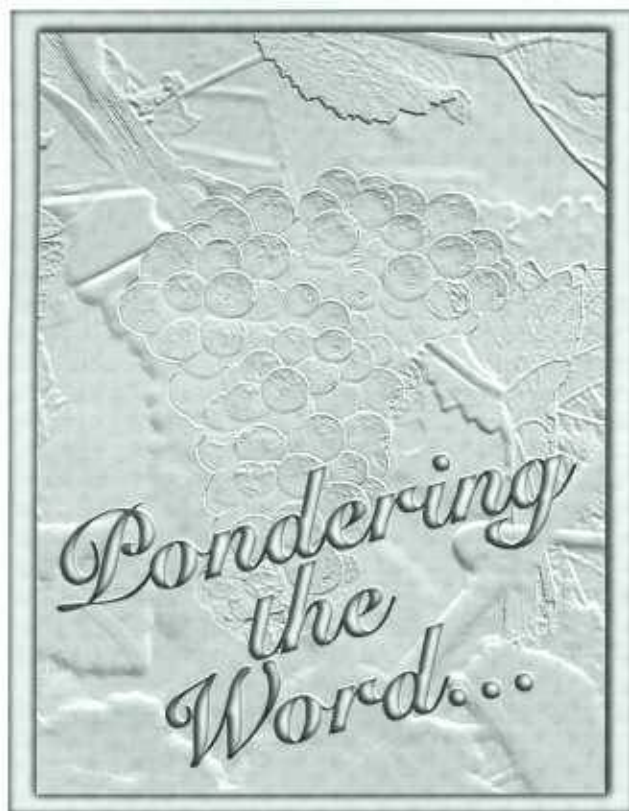
No more will the cannon's roar frighten,
No tidings of war cause alarm,
For Christ is now reigning in Zion,
The strong One to banish all harm.
Just listen! what songs of rejoicing,
What music is filling the air!
For now is earth's sad conflict over,
God's kingdom established so fair.

The eyes of the blind He has opened,
The ears of the deaf are unstopped,
The tongue of the dumb is rejoicing,
The lame one now leaps as an hart.
No sickness is known the world over,
No terrors now make men afraid,
There's nothing to hurt, harm or frighten,
For peace with all men has been made.

The earth shines resplendent in beauty;
The desert blooms forth as the rose;
The land is majestic in glory;
Earth's nations enjoy sweet repose.
The angels' sweet melodies voicing
Sing praise to the King on His throne;
"All glory to God in the Highest,
And peace, for God's kingdom has come."

Rejoice and be glad all ye people,
Let praises fill heaven and earth,
For the Hope of the ages is reigning,
The land has received a new birth.
The prayer of the Savior is answered,
God's will on the earth now is done;
To Him be all power and glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.

—Mary A. Lee



Even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. In this way God qualified him as a perfect High Priest, and he became the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey him." —Hebrews 5:8-9, NLT

We stand in silent awe of Jesus' depth of character, yet here is a simple statement of how it was achieved: "He learned obedience through what he suffered." The test of obedience always comes when God's will crosses our inclinations. So long as everything goes our way, so long as our health is good and friends are congenial and the workplace is to our liking, our obedience may not be severely tested. But let the atmosphere change, let the pleasant situation change and desire come ahead of duty, and we come to the place where we must offer our dearest idol, humbly and in obedience, to the will of God.

This is real obedience.

But what matter the testings, if we can only say with Jesus, "It is finished," and know that eternal salvation awaits us?

What clearer statement could we find, that obedience is the price of salvation? And so Christ's suffering—and ours—takes on new splendor, and the testings of life become opportunities for triumph.

The faith that saves means trust, commitment and complete obedience in every situation.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." —Colossians 3:2

Christians have often been called "other worldly," though the term has often been misunderstood by critics and misconceived by those who called themselves Christians. Apparently some in Colosse were seeking salvation by a pseudo spirituality, which did not break their involvement with this world's interests and values. Though they professed the heavenly, their goals were earthly and their aspirations were limited to the things on earth. Paul would lift their minds from the "things which perish" to the higher level, where Christ reigns. In this way they can transform secular life and the material world itself into the service of enduring, spiritual ends.

"Set your minds on things above"—that is, our interests, the aspirations of our hearts are to be kept fixed on the heavenly realm, not encumbered with earthly pursuits. For only the heavenly realm will last. Only in the heavenly realm can we find life, enduring life.

Paul in these words lays upon us the responsibility for procuring that life. We cannot have it unless we set our minds on things above. In other words, Christian "other worldliness" is an absolute necessity. It is the only way out of this world into the better world to come.

Here, then, is the goal: to live a genuine Christian life in the earthly setting.

The rest of Paul's letter is the "How-To's" of obtaining this goal.

In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use. If you keep yourself pure, you will be a utensil God can use for His purpose. You will be clean and you will be ready for the Master to use for every good work." 2 Timothy 2:20-21, NLT

It is the same point made by Jesus in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Wheat and tares grow together, in the same field. Just so, expensive utensils and rough clay pots are used in the same house. Which will we be? The choice is ours.

One can always criticize because there are those in the Church who are imperfect, but judgment belongs to God. And in the meantime, both serve a useful purpose. Yet who wants to be *clay* when he can be *gold*?

It is the duty of the believer to keep clear of everything that pollutes. And what is his reason for so doing? Those who become pure and holy will be ready for special service—expanded usefulness to the Master. His glory will not to be exemption from service, but more and still more service.

Such is the service of honor which God will reward with *eternal* usefulness. □

Do You Really Believe?

(Continued from page 13)

could accomplish! If we really believed that one of these days we could stand approved with Christ and the saints of all the ages, we would not be able to forget it for a moment. That indescribable joy would begin to fill us even now as we thought about it, and we would be so intent on meriting it that nothing in this wide world could divert our thinking. There would be no interest in life strong enough to distract our vision, if—if we had sufficient faith!

The Test of Faith

God's people in all ages have had to be heroes of faith. They have had to have confidence in what they could not see, even when they had visible evidence. And if they who could see Divine power had to consciously build faith, how diligently we must apply ourselves, we who must walk *entirely by faith*! How constant should be our effort in building stronger and ever stronger faith!

In this age when faith is so critical, when maintaining faith is a matter of spiritual life or death, we need to remember the resurrection of Christ. This one event sets Christ apart from all other men. And the

evidence that He rose is abundant. The empty tomb was a sign incontrovertible that it *did* happen; even those who crucified Him had no other answer.

Even today, the Resurrection stands as a citadel of faith. No other religion proclaims its hero physically dead and resurrected—no one attempts such a claim, for it could be too easily disproven. Power to restore life belongs only to the God of heaven.

One supreme test in this closing hour of the day of salvation may well be the test of faith, for "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Jesus compared the condition of the world and of His people just prior to His second advent to the days of Noah and Lot. The comparison may be more realistic than we are accustomed to thinking; only eight were saved in Noah's day, only three in Lot's. Both calamities were made known in advance so that people might escape. But men and women were too complacent to respond, too unbelieving, too absorbed in their own small circles of existence to listen to a message from heaven. If so few believed when they saw and heard the Lord's messengers directly, what of us today? Our

faith should be growing by leaps and bounds as we see the word of the Lord fulfilled.

What a superabundant reward will be ours if we hold on to the end. Perhaps the words of Peter were recorded especially for us; to no other people could he have spoken so forcefully than to us who may live to see the great day of the appearing of Jesus Christ. Wrote Peter: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

No other people have lived so near to His appearing. No other people have so realistically hoped to live to see that appearing. What praise and honor and glory will be ours if we stand this final test of faith! It is the blessing of which Jesus spoke to Martha so long ago: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." And His question: "Believest thou this?" should bring from us an answer so affirmative that it will set our hearts pounding with expectancy and send our feet flying toward the Kingdom. Our actions will confirm our living, abounding faith as we reply: "Yes, Lord, I believe." □

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 23

Who Is Older than Whom? (In order by birth)

1. Abraham, Amram, Aaron, Abihu
2. Rahab, Ruth, Esther, Mary
3. Nathan, Isaiah, Malachi, John the Baptist
4. King Saul, Solomon, Zechariah, Silas
5. Aaron, Eli, Samuel, Bartholomew
6. Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Miriam
7. Caleb, Gideon, Samuel, Ezekiel
8. Asenath, Abigail, Athaliah, Anna
9. Judah, Joseph, Joab, Jonah
10. Asa, Ahab, Azariah, Agabus

Common Interests

1. sons of Jacob
2. rulers before whom Paul witnessed
3. scribes
4. priests
5. false gods
6. judges of Israel
7. cities having churches to which Jesus sent a letter (Revelation, chapters 2-3)
8. deacons in the newly formed Christian Church
9. women who prophesied
10. apostles of Jesus
11. minor prophets of the Old Testament

Who Dreamed?

1. Joseph (Genesis 37:9)
2. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:34)
3. Pharaoh (Genesis 41:25-31)
4. Jacob (Genesis 28:12)
5. Pharaoh's butler (Genesis 40:8-10)
6. Joseph (Matt. 2:13)
7. Daniel (Daniel 7:1-8)
8. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2)
9. The wise men who came to visit the Christ child (Matt. 2:12)

All About Faith

1. Abraham (Rom. 4:16)
2. stewards (1 Cor. 4:2)
3. Thomas (John 20:27)
4. The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-21)
5. Jesus (Luke 16:10)
6. Hebrews 11
7. "I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10)
8. The centurion whose servant was healed (Matt. 8:10)
9. Peter when he walked on the water (Matt. 14:31)
10. The shield of faith (Eph. 6:16)
11. "Your faith groweth exceedingly" (2 Thess. 1:3)
12. Faith, hope and charity (or love) (1 Cor. 13:13)

Remember the Sloth

There is a strange tropical animal called the sloth, which is considered the slowest of all living creatures; in fact, it is so slow that many have marveled that it has survived. The Spanish named it *perezoso* meaning, "lazy." Its nest resembles that of a termite or a wasp, hanging upside down in a tree.

The sloth is said to be a revolting and pitiful sight, for its shoulders appear to be out of joint and the legs cannot support the weight of the body. It moves so slowly that its action or progress is barely perceptible. Because of their inertia and stupidity, one writer says of them, "They are the last possible term amongst creatures of the flesh and blood, and any further defect would have made their existence impossible. Soon they will be erased from the catalog of living things."

Do we desire the fate of the sloth, or do we wish to have our names written in the Lamb's book of life? "Up with your listless hands! Strengthen your weak knees! And make straight paths for your feet. Let no lame souls be dislocated, but rather set them right" (Hebrews 12:12, Moffatt). Our time is limited and we must not be slothful.

The book of Hebrews says it well: "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12).

Do you love life? Then do not squander time; for time is the stuff life is made of.

To be proud of knowledge is to be blind with light.

If we take care of the minutes, the years will take care of themselves.

A single track mind is all right if it is on the right track.

*What have I done with this life of mine,
This life God gave to me?
What have I done with His gift of speech,
These eyes with which I see?*

*What have I heard with these ears of mine
Of good and set it free?
What have I done as I've gone my way,
What have I done with me?*

*How have I succored the ones in need,
How have I spent the years?
How many times have I brought home smiles,
How many times caused tears?*

*Father, forgive me when I have failed,
Help me to set things right;
And let me leave the record clean—
My heart might stop tonight.*

Emphasize the Beautiful

Why is it that many of us are so prone to emphasize the unpleasant, the disagreeable things of life? Instead of putting such great stress upon the unpleasant things of life, why not turn about and form a habit of emphasizing the beautiful things, the things of delight; the happy, pleasant experiences that are ours? It is so easy for us to emphasize the things that seem unpleasant, but many times we could make them pleasant if we would only change our mental attitude toward them, consider them from a different viewpoint.

Don't Give Up

*If the way seems rough and the journey steep;
If you find it hard the pace to keep—
Don't give up!*

*If you seem to lose when you want to win
If the feeling comes that you must give in—
Don't give up!*

*If sickness smites and lays you low;
If the prompting comes to let things go—
Don't give up!*

*If all the world seems hard, unjust,
Cling close to God and in Him trust—
Don't give up!*

Christ Arose!

A stillness lay upon the earth,
As in the eastern sky
The signs appeared in coral tints
That day was drawing nigh;
Yet 'neath the shadow of the hill
There stood a Roman band,
To guard the tomb where Jesus lay,
As Pilate gave command.

But hark! An earthquake rends the rock,
The guards fall to the ground;
An angel rolls the stone away
And Death no more is found;
For 'tis the Resurrection Day,
And Christ in victory
Steps forth from out the shrouded tomb
To live eternally.

Oh, hallelujah! He arose
Who had been crucified.
He lives! And all shall live with Him
Who in His love abide.
The bars of death He tore away
And that grim monster's might
Was conquered by the living pow'r
Of Christ, the Lord of light.

In triumph then He trod the earth
Which had received His blood,
And fragrant beauty burst anew
Like blossoms from the bud,
As men beheld the mystery
That He who once was dead
Is now alive for evermore
Just as the Scripture said.

Sound His praises from the heart
For His undying light.
Give praises to our God above
Who doeth all things right.
Awake! O world, to welcome Him
Who, from the gates of pearl
Shall soon descend with angels flanked
Love's banner to unfurl.

Behold, He now stands at the door,
Then haste your lamp to trim,
Lift up your eyes in gratitude
O Christian, worship Him!
He breaks the fetters from the soul,
New life through Him is born,
Then praise the living Lord of life
This Resurrection morn!

